

DESCRIPTION OF RESOURCES

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Among the significant cultural resources associated with El Camino Real de los Tejas are archeological and historic sites, road traces, cultural landscapes, and sites with high potential for public benefit, which were identified in accordance with the National Trails System Act, sections 12(1) and 12(2). The sites and structures that are directly related to the trail, both physically and thematically, are described below.

Archeological and Historic Resources (Including Road Segments)

Over the years travelers on El Camino Real de los Tejas have left behind many traces of their journeys: road cuts and river crossings, artifacts, campsites, and buildings. These physical remains visibly document the route and its travelers and provide a unique insight into American history. Mission and presidio sites linked by El Camino Real, along with 19th century sites along the Old San Antonio Road provide insight into the lives of the people, both European and American Indian, who settled the province of Texas.

Most of the sites described in this section are not managed for public use. Some archeological resources on public and private lands potentially could be made available for public use, provided such use could be managed to avoid resource degradation. Many of the archeological sites associated with the route were identified during past surveys of road corridors or development areas. The following section describes these archeological sites and historic resources. Further information on many of these sites is included in “Public Use Sites,” page 58).

Los Adaes State Commemorative Area is a major archeological site associated with El Camino Real de los Tejas, and several segments of El Camino Real are still visible west, north, and east of the area. The site is a potential national historic landmark.

Fort Jesup was established in 1822 by Gen. Zachary Taylor as the southernmost and first in the string of frontier forts stretching from Louisiana northward to Canada along the “permanent” Indian frontier. It operated as a military reservation until the late 1840s. Later known as the “Cradle of the Mexican War,” the area is now preserved as one of the Louisiana state parks. The 22-acre site contains a reconstructed officers’ quarters with a museum, conference rooms, and offices. There are extensive archeological remains and building foundations on the site, as well as the original mess kitchen, built circa 1822. This building has been refurbished for interpretation. The fort is a national historic landmark.

The Stoker House, a national register property dating to the late 1840s, is situated on El Camino Real (Louisiana Highway 6) in the vicinity of Fort Jesup. This architecturally significant log house (the oldest in Sabine Parish) illustrates typical change through time. The Stoker farm furnished produce to Fort Jesup and played a significant role in the development of the area’s history.

Near Geneva, Texas, El Lobanillo Ranch has been continuously occupied since the mid-1700s. It was established by Antonio Gil Ybarbo, who lived here until the presidios and missions of East Texas were evacuated in the 1770s.

Several archeological investigations have documented the mission of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de los Ais and the adjacent segment of El Camino Real de los Tejas in San Augustine, Texas (Corbin, Kalina, and Alex 1980). These investigations recovered archeological data illustrating about 50 years of occupation by Spanish colonists and the historic Caddo mission Indians in the piney woods of eastern Texas (Corbin, Kalina, and Alex 1980, 84).

Excavations conducted in 1973 and 1974 by North Texas State University uncovered remains of the church and the cemetery of Mission Rosario, Goliad County, Texas. Excavations at the nearby La Bahía mission and presidio also uncovered numerous artifacts documenting 19th century use of the Spanish colonial fortification (Fox 1983, 88).

Beginning in 1966 and continuing until the present, controlled archeological investigations of the San Antonio Missions have revealed a great deal about the early structures, food, tools, subsistence, American Indian workshops, water supplies (acequias), American Indian apartments and living areas, and quarries. Thousands of artifacts related to the long history of these sites and their Indian and Spanish occupants have been recovered. (Further description of these missions and the various excavations can be found in Fox 1983, 98–116.)

At least six known archeological sites in San Antonio Missions National Historical Park represent prehistoric occupation of the area. Dozens of other archeological sites in the San Antonio area date to the Spanish Colonial period in Texas. These sites contain extensive archeological remains, including burial middens, structural remains, irrigation systems, etc. These sites include the mission ranchos that raised livestock to supply and support the missions.

Another trail-related site is the Rancho de las Cabras, the Spanish rancho directly related to one of five San Antonio missions, about 25 miles southeast of San Antonio, near Floresville. The site, which has recently been added to San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It contains the archeological remains of diamond-shaped ramparts with rooms along the walls.

The remains at Las Cabras may include archeological evidence of the Coahuilteco Indians “as well as *Ladinos* who had been Hispanicized at Mission Espada and its ranch” (Fox 1983, 114). In addition to cattle production, the ranch was intended to provide inhabitants security from Indian raids (Briggs 1989, 4).

The Pérez cemetery is a state archeological landmark near San Antonio on the north bank of the Medina River. The 100-meter-square cemetery is within the boundaries of Rancho de Pérez, the Spanish land grant ranch of the Perez family that is privately owned and has been maintained by the family for more than 100 years. The cemetery is significant for its association with the family and for site features that may have existed as early as 1800.

San Pedro Park is a 40-acre municipal park surrounding the source of San Pedro Springs, the original site of the present city of San Antonio. Prehistorically the area was the village of Yanaguana, which belonged to a tribe known as the Payayas. The area was first identified by the Espinosa-Olivares-Aguerra Expedition in 1709 as Agua de San Pedro. In 1718 the site was chosen for the first presidio and Villa de Béxar. (The Mission San Antonio de Valero and the fort Presidio de Béxar were constructed in this area.) The Spanish government dedicated the springs as a public space in 1729, and the site has functioned as a park continuously since then. Civilian settlers were brought to this area from the Canary Islands in 1731 and assigned temporary farming lands. The remains of their stone-lined acequias can still be found in the park. During the Mexican period the site was still frequented by Indian tribes, and a trading post operated at the springs. The site is listed on both the national and state historic registers.

Another Bexar County site, a state archeological landmark near the Medina River, contains both prehistoric remains and the remnants of a historic occupation dating to between 1830 and 1860. The site appears to be the remains of a small rural farmstead from the Texas Republic and early statehood periods.

TXDOT archeologists determined that a segment of the Laredo-San Antonio Road used during the early 19th century followed Somerset Road, west of the community of Somerset (TXDOT 1995, 5). Research for a road improvement project in Bexar County indicated that much of F.M. 2790 (a Farm-to-Market road) between Somerset Road and the Atascosa county line was within the mission ranch of El Atascosa, owned and operated by Mission San José. Research also indicated that part of the Laredo to San Antonio Road followed Somerset Road in the early 19th century (TXDOT 1995, 5).

A well-preserved segment of the Old San Antonio Road parallels an existing road right-of-way within the city of San Marcos, and extensive ruts parallel nearby county roads. The crossing of the Old San Antonio Road at Willow Springs Creek has also been identified and recorded. Aerial photographs show the segment of historic road and a fork in the road that may have led to the San Marcos River. A route that connected El Camino Real to Nacogdoches ran through the Olmos Basin from the present Olmos Dam to Hildebrand Avenue; an old Spanish outpost was situated just north of the dam.

Several early Spanish maps of Texas show El Camino Real passing through the southern part of the present Dimmit County. Zivley's "Kings Highway Field Notes" identifies the location of El Camino Real as being just south of Caterina, Texas. According to Zivley, the trail continued southwest past the pools of Barrera, Caterina Creek, and Lomas Bonitas before turning northwest at Toya Tank to access the Paso de Francia ford of the Rio Grande to reach San Juan de Bautista.

The San Xavier Mission Complex Archeological District contains five contiguous and related sites belonging to the era of Spanish colonization of central Texas in the middle 18th century (1745–55). The district, which is near the San Gabriel River in Milam County, contains three mission sites: San Francisco Xavier de Horcasitas (for the Tonkawa groups — the Mayeye, the Yerbipame, and the Yojaune), San Ildefonso (for the Atakapan groups — the Orcoquisac, the

Deadose and the Bidais), and Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria (for the coastal groups, including the Coco). The other two sites are related to the Spanish Colonial occupation of the valley. The 10-year existence of these missions (1745–55) was “one of overwhelming hardship, discouragement, harassment by the Apaches, murder, and eventual abandonment of the area (National Register 1973). The district is listed on the national register of historic places. Minimal archeological investigation has been conducted in this area (Fox 1983, 91).

A number of river crossings have been documented archeologically and are tentatively identified as El Camino Real crossings. These sites are as follows:

- a site on the Medina river south of Garza’s crossing
- sites at the Old Palo Alto crossing near modern Texas Highway 16 and the Medina River
- a Texas state landmark known as the Dolores/Perez/Applewhite Crossing of the Medina River.

According to Hubbard and Fox (1990, 6) the crossings associated with the Woll and Presidio Roads, which ran between Guerrero and San Antonio, “are still visible as deeply eroded, linear scars near Cuervo and Tovar Creeks on the Texas side.” Farther west in Dimmit County, wagon ruts from the trail have been etched into the sandstone at Peña Creek. There is a historic river crossing, marked by bank depressions, on the Guadalupe River immediately upstream from the bridge on Texas 183; the crossing, which is known locally as the Santa Anna crossing, was used historically by travelers going to and from Gonzales to the south.

The archeological site of El Fuerte de Santa Cruz (also known as El Fuerte del Cíbolo, Fort Cibolo, Santa Cruz de Cíbolo, and Carvajal Crossing) lies on the west bank of Cibolo Creek at the location of a natural ford where the La Bahía road crossed. The Presidio de San Antonio de Béxar first established a garrison here about 1735 to guard the road and the surrounding cattle ranches. It was abandoned in 1737. El Fuerte del Cíbolo was established in 1771 and continued to function until around 1782 (Herrington 1984, 1).²⁴

The Reading Site, near the Brazos River crossing on Texas Highway 21, is related to the early Spanish river crossing as well as to Moseley’s Ferry, which operated in the area between 1846 and 1912 (Carlson 1984, 1–2). Maps and land records housed in the Texas General Land Office indicate that the Camino Real formed the northern boundary of Brazos County (Hartmann and Hailey 1993, 3).

Only a few sites occupied during the Mexican Revolution and the period when the Republic of Texas existed have been located and tested. TXDOT archeologists have located the archeological remains of the Villa San Marcos de Neve. San Marcos de Neve was a small Spanish settlement established in 1808 on the San Marcos River as one of the civilian settlements meant to act as a barrier to American encroachment. A small military post was at or near the settlement. Plagued by harsh winters and drought, Indian raids, and revolution

24. More information on El Fuerte de Santa Cruz is available in Robert Thonhoff, *El Fuerte del Cíbolo: Sentinel of the Béxar: La Bahía Ranches* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1992).

elsewhere in New Spain, the Tejanos abandoned the fledgling settlement in 1812 following the siege of La Bahía (TXDOT, John W. Clark Jr., pers. comm. to Diane Rhodes, NPS, 1996). Today only the recorded archeological site remains. In 1835 Thomas McGeehee settled his family near the Old San Antonio Road crossing. The route of the road is known in this area from historic maps and from features on topographic maps.

Archeologists also have uncovered evidence of the 1836 battle at the Alamo and have excavated parts of La Villita (the small village of settlers and military families that was occupied during the Spanish Colonial and Mexican periods). Numerous sites of Austin's and DeWitt's colonists and of ferry landings have been unearthed during reservoir surveys (Fox 1983). In the San Antonio area, the ruins of an Anglo-American ranch dating from the 1840s (the Walker Ranch ruins) were found near Panther Springs Creek.

The site of the 1813 Battle of Medina is just south of San Antonio. Here Royalist troops led by Gen. Joaquín Arredondo decimated some 1,400 American filibusters and Spanish rebels. The battle at the Medina River "effectively destroyed the Republican cause in Texas" (Fehrenbach 1968, 126).

The archeological ruins of Villa de Dolores, 23 miles south of Laredo on U.S. Highway 83, illustrate the civil settlement of Nuevo Santander. Dolores was established in 1750 and thrived for some time as an important cattle ranch. "Dolores and Laredo . . . remain as the most significant reminders of the Spanish colonial era in Texas relative to the last effort at colonization. . . . Dolores is the only [extant] ranch from this period on the United States side of the River" (National Register 1973, 8).

In the Bastrop area, the Old San Antonio Road followed the San Antonio Prairie along the route of modern Texas Highway 21 from San Marcos to Bastrop to Caldwell. The earliest settlement in the county apparently was a stockaded military garrison, the Puesto del Colorado, established at the present site of Bastrop (and the Colorado River ford) by Cordero y Bustamante. Troops were stationed here in 1806 to protect commerce on the trail. Zebulon Pike recorded the Puesto as a small Spanish station in the early 1800s.

Bastrop was at the western edge of Stephen F. Austin's original colony, which was granted in 1821. El Camino Real was used as a boundary for Austin's Little Colony (1827), which was also in the Bastrop vicinity. The Little Colony was established along the banks of the Colorado River, where the river was crossed by the road leading from Bexar to Nacogdoches (El Camino Real). The grant boundary went up the Colorado for 15 leagues, thence east on a line that ran parallel with El Camino Real to the dividing ridge of the waters of the Brazos and Colorado Rivers. From there it followed the line of the Nashville Company colony to El Camino Real and then went south to the place of beginning.

Pioneers began to settle on the prairie east of Austin in the 1820s and 1830s. During the 1830s Tumlinson's Blockhouse was built in the northwesternmost part of Austin's Colony on Blockhouse Creek south of Leander. Shortly thereafter the settlement of Waterloo was founded on the Colorado River at the present site of Austin. Austin became the capital of the Republic

of Texas in 1839, and Travis County was created from Bastrop County in 1840 (Hubbard, Brown, and Jackson 1984, 9–10).

The Paso de Francia crossing of the Rio Grande, near Guerrero, Coahuila, Mexico, was used by early Spanish entradas and also by later explorers and military men such as Antonio López de Santa Anna. Part of Santa Anna's army crossed the river on its way to the Alamo.

Laredo was founded in 1755, the last of the towns and missions established in Nuevo Santander under the direction of José de Escandón. It was a villa on the north bank of the Rio Grande near a ford. The area was subject to numerous Lipan Apache and Comanche raids through the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1849 Camp Crawford (also called Camp Laredo) was established in this area. When a new post was built in 1850, the name was changed to Fort McIntosh. The remains, now an archeological site, are situated on the grounds of Laredo State College.

Ethnographic Resources

French and Spanish explorers encountered many different American Indian tribes in the area that is now Texas and Louisiana. The Karankawan Indians were first documented by the French when the ill-fated Narvaez expedition landed on the Texas coast in 1528. The Karankawans were later responsible for the destruction of Fort St. Louis. The original mission of Espíritu Santo de Zuñiga was built for the Karankawa.

The Spaniards encountered and described a number of Coahuiltecan bands, including the Payayas at San Antonio, the Aranamas (south of the Payayas, between the San Antonio and Guadalupe Rivers) and the Tamiques and the Orejons (along the lower Nueces). The San Antonio missions were built to serve substantial populations of Coahuiltecan groups living along the San Antonio River and its tributaries. In 1749 Espíritu Santo de Zuñiga mission and Fort La Bahía were moved to Goliad to serve both the Karankawa and Coahuiltecan Indians.

A group of small tribes in central Texas known as the Tonkawa were first described by the Spanish explorers in 1691. In the mid-1700s some of the Tonkawa became associated with the San Xavier missions on the San Gabriel River.

Spanish and French explorers in western Louisiana and eastern Texas met the Atakapa, a sedentary group of tribes that included the Deadoze, Bidai, and Patiri.

The Caddoan-speaking tribes of east Texas and western Louisiana comprised the Adaes (the Adai and their linguistic relatives, the Eyeish), the Doustioni, Natchitoches, Ouachita, and

Yatasi, most of whom were living in the vicinity of Natchitoches, Mansfield, Monroe, Robeline, and along the Sabine River in Louisiana (Webb and Gregory 1986, 18).²⁵

The Hasinai, a Caddoan confederacy of small tribes (including the Anadarko, Ais, Hainai, Hasinai, Nabiti, Nacogdoches, and Nabedache) resided along the upper Neches, Trinity, and Angelina Rivers. The Ka'dohadacho, the largest of the southern Caddoan confederacies, which included the Petit Caddo, Nasoni, Nanatsoho, and Upper Natchitoches, originally settled along the Red River in northeastern Texas and southwestern Arkansas. Pressure from the Osage caused members of this confederation to migrate southward, settling north of the Yatasi near Caddo Prairie and Caddo Lake, Louisiana. The missions of Los Adaes and Nuestra Señora de los Ais were established to serve some of these Caddoan groups.

Tribes such as the Kiowa, Comanche, and Apache were highly mobile hunters who used horses acquired from the Spanish to follow bison herds across the southern plains. As the original tribes inhabiting southern Texas were gathered into missions, the Plains groups quickly moved southward, hunting and raiding. Although missions were also established for some of the Plains tribes during the mid-1700s, the Spanish missionaries usually were not successful in converting these nonsedentary groups.

Over time the Indian population of the area that is now Texas and Louisiana was sharply reduced by disease, raiding, and warfare. By the early 1800s most of the Coahuiltecan groups in south Texas had disappeared, either dead from disease or absorbed into the Mexican population. The same was true for the Atakapan Indian groups living along the Neches, Trinity, and Colorado Rivers. They had sold most of their land and had been assimilated, although a few “Sabines” claim Atakapan ancestry (Johnson 1994, 60). The Muskogean-speaking Alabama and Coushatta tribes (originally from Alabama and part of the Upper Creek Confederacy) migrated into what is now east Texas in the 1700s.

Although abortive attempts were made to establish reservations for the Southern Comanches, Anadarkos, Caddos, Tawakonis, and Tonkawas on the Brazos River, the state of Texas “acknowledged no Indian ownership” (Utley 1984, 55–6). Federal relocation policies forced these tribes to move to Indian Territory north of the Red River after 1867. The present-day Kiowa, Apache, and Comanche tribes jointly own land in Caddo County, Oklahoma. The Tonkawa live on their reservation in Kay County, Oklahoma. Because of their history of peaceful relations, the Alabama-Coushatta were allowed to remain in southeast Texas when the other tribes were relocated to Oklahoma (Tiller 1996, 565).

Most of the Caddoan groups in eastern Texas were also removed to Indian Territory in Oklahoma. Their descendants now reside on lands held in common with the Wichita and Delawares near Bingham, Oklahoma. Post-1763 Choctaw incursions into northwestern Louisiana resulted in a resident population (the Ebarb Choctaw-Apache) centered in the small rural community of Ebarb in Sabine Parish (Gregory 1992).

25. Their aboriginal territory stretched from the Ouachita River south to the mouth of the Cane River and west to the Sabine River (Webb and Gregory 1986, 18).

Many of the Adaes “may have been absorbed . . . into the general *mestizo* population at Los Adaes and still have descendants in northwestern Louisiana” (Webb and Gregory 1986, 33). Other descendants of the original inhabitants of Louisiana and east Texas live in the communities surrounding Spanish Lake, Louisiana.

Cultural Landscapes

In several areas the landforms and vegetation and the general configuration of the road appear to approximate early travelers’ descriptions. Areas such as the Paso de Francia crossing of the Rio Grande near Guerrero, Coahuila, Mexico, the open plains of West Texas, and the wall of forest and underbrush along the narrow, winding roads in Louisiana are evocative of the historic landscape traveled by early explorers and settlers. The near foreground viewsheds of the San Antonio Missions and San Juan Bautista also retain much of their historic ambiance, which gives visitors a strong sense of what the area must have been like during the 1700s and 1800s.

Researchers have identified a small prairie in Houston County (now known as Murchison’s Prairie) as the “Prairie called Castano,” a *paraje* mentioned in the early Spanish narratives. This identification was based on an analysis of a late 1800s geologic study of the county, historic maps, travelers’ accounts, and grant documents (TXDOT, Corbin, pers. comm. Nov. 21, 1997). A small relic pine population west of the Trinity River also helped define the early route through the Hurricane-Kickapoo Shoals river crossing (TXDOT, Corbin, pers. comm. Nov. 21, 1997).

The Arroyo Hondo is a significant cultural landmark. It was noted in early journals, and it was the international boundary between the French and Spanish territories from 1721 to 1762 and the boundary between Spanish Texas and Spanish Louisiana from 1762 through 1803. The river separated Spanish Texas and American Louisiana from 1803 to 1819 and was the eastern boundary of the Neutral Ground from 1806 to 1819 (L’Herisson 1981, 94).

El Camino Real travelers’ accounts describe a natural landmark that probably is the feature known today as Sugar Loaf Mountain, which is near the Brazos River crossing in the vicinity of Hearne, Texas (TXDOT, Corbin, pers. comm. Nov. 21, 1997).

NATURAL RESOURCES

The natural resources of the area are described in appendix B.

SOCIOECONOMIC RESOURCES

Various segments of El Camino Real de los Tejas pass through the Texas counties listed in the next paragraph, along with the Louisiana parishes of Sabine and Natchitoches. The route traverses two metropolitan areas, San Antonio (population 1,490,000) and Austin (1,041,000), and several smaller cities: Laredo (165,000), New Braunfels (34,000), San Marcos (35,000), Bryan-College Station (combined population 117,000), and Nacogdoches (31,200). It also passes through small communities of western Louisiana, ending near Natchitoches (population 17,300). With the exception of Laredo, the southwestern part of the trail is fairly undeveloped in comparison with the northeastern part.

Texas Counties through Which Parts of El Camino Real de los Tejas Pass

Atascosa	DeWitt	La Salle	Milam	Williamson
Bastrop	Dimmit	Lavaca	Nacogdoches	Wilson
Bee	Fayette	Lee	Robertson	Zapata
Bexar	Frio	Leon	Sabine	Zavala
Brazos	Goliad	Live Oak	San Augustine	
Burleson	Guadalupe	Madison	Travis	
Caldwell	Hays	Maverick	Victoria	
Cherokee	Houston	McMullen	Walker	
Comal	Karnes	Medina	Webb	

Across the border from Laredo, Texas, is Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico, which has a population of approximately 350,000. Across the border from Eagle Pass, Texas, is Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico, approximate population 33,000. Guerrero, Coahuila, Mexico, a small community about 25 miles downstream of Eagle Pass, has been considered “the gateway to Texas” by historians. The town is active in the preservation of the historic plaza, surrounding buildings, and the remains of Misión San Bernardo and the Presidio de San Juan Bautista.

The Texas economy is supported by the natural resources of cattle, cotton, forestry and forest products, and oil and gas, as well as by service industries, tourism, and high technology industries such as computers, semiconductors, and instruments. Tourism is the third largest industry in Texas. In 1995 direct tourism-related spending generated \$25.4 billion for the state, representing 5.5% of the overall revenue (information supplied by Texas Department of Economic Development, Tourism Division).

Oil, gas, and petrochemical production play a major role in the Louisiana economy. Agriculture is also an important industry, producing sweet potatoes, sugar cane, rice, cotton, pecans, and soybeans. The tourism industry affects at least one out of every 10 people in the state (information supplied by Louisiana Tourism Division).

LANDOWNERSHIP AND LAND USE

Approximately half of the multiple routes of El Camino Real are within state or county road rights-of-way. Approximately 72 miles of the route are on federal lands. The rest of the route is on private lands. The land use along the route alignments varies from arid lands to grasslands and dense woodlands, intensive agriculture, grazing, low-density rural residential, to urban and industrial uses.

PUBLIC USE SITES

There are many existing public use sites along El Camino Real de los Tejas, including state and national parks, state historic sites, state monuments, highway historical markers, recreation areas, historic districts, campgrounds, picnic areas, national forests, scenic roads, and various museums (see appendix C). A number of these public use sites (such as state and national parks, historical markers, and museums) have some thematic relationship either directly or indirectly to El Camino Real. Others (such as picnic areas) do not relate directly to the history of El Camino Real but could offer opportunities for the public to learn about, see, experience, and appreciate the trail. Not all public use sites would qualify as officially certified or federal components of a national historic trail (see the description of alternative 1, p. 64, for a discussion of certified sites).

National Park System Units

The National Park Service manages San Antonio Missions National Historical Park under a series of cooperative agreements with the Catholic Archdiocese of San Antonio, the state of Texas, and others. The park contains four frontier Spanish Missions: Mission Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña, Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo, Mission San Juan Capistrano, and Mission San Francisco de la Espada.²⁶ These missions, which are situated in a north-south corridor along the San Antonio River, formed the foundation for the city of San Antonio. Also in the park is the Rancho de las Cabras, which is about 25 miles southeast of San Antonio.

Mission San José y San Miguel de Aguayo was established in 1720 on the east bank of the San Antonio River about 5 miles south of Mission San Antonio de Valero. It was intended to serve several Coahuiltecan Indian bands. Sometime between 1724 and 1727 Mission San José was moved to its present location on the west side of the river; an intermediate site may have been occupied for a short time. Eventually San José became the largest and best known of the Texas missions. By 1791 the Indian population had begun to decline, and in 1794 the mission properties were divided among the remaining Indians. The church was placed under the control of the local priest in 1824 (Hard et al. 1995, 2–3). San José was the oldest, largest, and

26. Mission San Antonio de Valero (the Alamo), built in 1718, is not part of the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park. For a description of the Alamo, see the section on “State and Local Parks,” p. 60.

most successful of the four missions now in the park. Extensive reconstruction in the 1930s replicated many features of the original compound. The mill at San José, built circa 1794 and reconstructed in the 1930s, is undergoing restoration.

Mission Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña hosted religious festivals since 1731, when it was transferred to the Río San Antonio. The church remains an important symbol of the Spanish mission program. The original mission included numerous buildings, walls, a farm, an orchard, a ranch, and an acequia system. Today only the church and the convento remain. However, with its decorative architecture and remnant wall and ceiling decorations, the church looks essentially as it did more than 200 years ago, when it was at the center of local religious activity.

Mission San Juan Capistrano, originally known as San José de los Nazonis while in East Texas, was established about 2.5 miles south of Mission San José in 1731. The rich mission farm and pastures and the work of various American Indian artisans made the mission a self-sustaining community. With its surplus, San Juan established a trade network stretching east to Louisiana and south to Coahuila, Mexico. The mission also supported local settlers and presidios by trading foodstuffs and finished products to them. A substantial part of the mission compound is in ruins, but a planned demonstration farm will illustrate to visitors the mission's former importance as an economic center.

Mission San Francisco de la Espada was originally Mission San Francisco de los Tejas. After their retreat from eastern Texas in 1731, the mission was relocated to the San Antonio River and renamed. Espada is an excellent example of a mission where Indians were trained in a trade so that once the mission program was completed, the parishioners could maintain a livelihood within the Spanish frontier society. The southernmost of the San Antonio chain of missions, Espada is surrounded by farmlands, fields, and a small residential area.

A part of ***Rancho de las Cabras*** has been preserved within the park as an archeological site. A plan is being prepared for the rancho that addresses preservation, visitor use, and facility needs.

Irrigation systems were a vital part of these farming and ranching activities. Historic water control and irrigation features in the park are Acequia de San José, Acequia de San Juan, Espada Dam, Espada Aqueduct, and Acequia de Espada. The Espada dam and aqueduct and the Espada and San Juan acequias depict actively used components of what was originally part of an elaborate complex of irrigation ditches used to water the extensive farmlands belonging to the missions. The Espada Dam, completed by 1740, is one of the oldest stone dams still functioning in the United States. The Espada Aqueduct, one of the oldest arched Spanish aqueducts in the United States, still serves its original purpose as part of the Espada Acequia, carrying water over Piedras Creek. It is the only Spanish-built aqueduct continuing in use today.

The mission churches, which continue to function as places of worship, are open to visitors. Rancho de las Cabras has limited visitation by guided tours only. In the past the missions

cultivated gardens (*huertas*) adjacent to the mission compounds, as well as large outlying farms (*labores*) and ranches. Some of the historic farmlands on the *labores* of San Juan and Espada are still under cultivation or used for grazing animals.

All four missions, Rancho de las Cabras, the Espada Dam, the Espada Aqueduct, and the San Juan Acequia are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Missions San José and Concepción and the Espada Dam, Acequia, and Aqueduct are national historic landmarks. The area that encompasses the missions that are part of the park has been recognized as a historic district by the city of San Antonio and by inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

National Forests

The *Angelina*, *Sabine*, and *Davy Crockett* National Forests in Texas and the Kisatchie National Forest in Louisiana contain segments of the trail and offer a variety of opportunities for outdoor recreation.

State and Local Parks, Monuments, and Sites

Sites in Louisiana. The earliest permanent European settlement in northwestern Louisiana was *Natchitoches*, Louisiana, which was founded in 1714 (Webb and Gregory 1986, 22). Old sections of the city are included in the Natchitoches Historic District, which became a national historic landmark in 1984. The district, which contains a mixture of businesses and residences, is in multiple ownership (city and private individuals). The Kate Chopin House — Bayou Folk Museum — in Cloutierville, in the southern tip of the Cane River Heritage Area, also is national historic landmark. It is owned by the Association of Natchitoches Women for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches.

The *Colonial Gateway Corral* is a hill situated on the campus of Northwestern State University in Natchitoches. It was first described by St. Denis and Bienville in 1700. It later became St. Denis's *vacherie* (cattle enclosure). Several trails are said to converge at this spot, including trails from El Camino Real on which cattle and horses were brought from the west. St. Denis's home is also here, as are the route of flatboats to New Orleans (to the east) and a road to Fort St. Jean Baptiste (to the north).

Also in Natchitoches is the site of *Fort Claiborne*, which was named after the governor of territorial Louisiana. It was built in 1804 to protect U.S. interests on the southwestern frontier. The fort was garrisoned almost continuously until Fort Jesup was established in 1822. An interpretive sign marks the site.

The site of *Fort Selden* is about 2 miles northwest of Natchitoches on Louisiana Highway 6. It was occupied in 1816–17 and 1819–22 to police the southwestern frontier and guard the Red River and Bayou Pierre. For a short time the commander of the Western Department, Gen. Edmund P. Gaines, occupied the fort. A historical marker identifies the site of the fort.

Fort St. Jean Baptiste aux Natchitos was built in 1716 on an island in the Red River (now Cane River Lake) at the request of St. Denis. It was to serve as a deterrent to Spanish eastward expansion (Webb and Gregory 1986, 22). The double-palisaded fort was later moved to the west bank and became the nucleus of the earliest European settlement in northwestern Louisiana. Fort St. Jean, abandoned after 1803, was demolished. It was replaced by nearby Fort Claiborne. In 1971 or 1972 the Louisiana Office of State Parks bought the site. The construction of the replica fort, which was based on the original plans of French architect-engineer Ignace F. Broutin, was completed in 1981 and is open to the public.

Los Adaes State Commemorative Area contains the Spanish colonial sites of Nuestra Señora del Pilar de Los Adaes Presidio and Mission San Miguel de Los Adaes (dating between 1721 and 1773) and segments of El Camino Real. Los Adaes was founded in 1721 to check French expansion into eastern Texas. It served as the capital of the province of Texas for more than 50 years before abandonment in 1773, and it helped maintain the international balance of power between France and Spain (Avery 1995, 1). The 50-acre site is readily accessible from Louisiana Highway 6 and is open to visitation via guided tours. The area's significant resources include extensive subsurface archeological remains of the presidio and visible traces of El Camino Real.

Fort Jesup State Commemorative Area was established in 1957. Fort Jesup, on the Old San Antonio Road, was established in 1822. The fort, which later became known as "the cradle of the Mexican War," was the most southwesterly military outpost in the United States from 1822 until the Mexican-American War. It was the major American fortification on the southwestern frontier, but after the Mexican-American War Gen. Zachary Taylor abandoned it. The fort originally contained a complex of 82 stone and log garrison buildings, which were sold at auctions between 1850 and 1885. By 1929 only the kitchen-mess hall remained. Local supporters helped to restore this building and refurnish it with period reproductions. The site includes stone pillars and archeological remains that mark the locations of other buildings. There is also a reconstructed officers' quarters (used as a visitor center), a museum, and a park administrative office.

A research program has been established through a cooperative agreement among the Louisiana Office of State Parks, Northwestern State University at Natchitoches, and the Louisiana Division of Archeology. An archeological laboratory has been built on the site. Los Adaes offers opportunities to study, research, and interpret life at a Spanish colonial frontier settlement (NPS 1993, 14). The site is owned and maintained by the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism.

The **Louisiana Colonial Trails**, a network of designated highways linking more than 100 historic sites and points of interest across the state, contains segments of El Camino Real de los Tejas and the Old San Antonio Road west of Natchitoches.

The **Toledo Bend Forest Scenic Byway** runs from Many, Louisiana, west to Toledo Bend Reservoir along Louisiana Highway 6 (Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism 1996b).

Drake's Salt Works, one of the oldest salt wells in Louisiana, was used prehistorically by a number of Indian groups. Bienville first noted the location of the salt works in 1700. It served as a major source of salt for Confederate forces. The site is situated off Louisiana Highway 156 in Natchitoches Parish. Portions of the site have been acquired by the Kisatchie National Forest and are open to the public.

Sites in Texas. **McKinney Falls State Park** in Austin contains the Onion Creek crossing of El Camino Real and the adjacent property and ruins of Thomas F. McKinney's home and mill. McKinney was one of Stephen F. Austin's original colonists.

Mission Nuestra Señora de los Dolores de los Ais, in San Augustine, was established in 1717 by the Ramón expedition to convert the Ais Caddo Indians. The mission was occupied for only a short time before abandonment. The Aguayo expedition reestablished the mission at a different location in 1722 (Fox 1983, 82). It was "a small struggling settlement that apparently barely managed to survive until 1773" (Fox 1983, 82). The Indians refused to live at the mission; instead, they occupied scattered villages in the surrounding pine woods of East Texas. Few were ever baptized. The site is owned by the city of San Augustine, which is constructing a visitor center, hiking trails, and interpretive signs.

Mission San Antonio de Valero, better known as the Alamo, was the first Spanish settlement to be established (1718) on the San Antonio River. It served as a way station between Mission San Juan Bautista on the Rio Grande and the missions in East Texas. The site was the scene of the Battle of the Alamo in 1836. The church structure that stands today was begun about 1755. Much of the mission compound was destroyed after the battle. The U.S. Army established a quartermaster depot in 1847 in the remaining stone buildings. However, archeological excavations revealed the original walled perimeter of the compound. The Daughters of the Republic of Texas operate this reconstructed state historic site, a major tourist attraction in downtown San Antonio. It is a national historic landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The **Spanish Governor's Palace** originally was a part of the Presidio de San Antonio de Béxar, whose function was to guard the San Antonio missions and colony. The site, which is now operated by the city of San Antonio, was used during the time San Antonio was the capital of the Spanish province of Texas.

The stone ruin at **Berg's Mill**, a property of the city of San Antonio, probably is associated with one of the milling operations once located in the vicinity. Most of these features lie within Espada and Acequia Parks in the Mission Historic District. The mill is a post-colonial structure.

San Pedro Park, a city park in San Antonio, was the original site of the present city of San Antonio. The site, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, was dedicated as a public space by the Spanish government in 1729. It has a long history of military and public recreational use. (More information is available on page 51.)

The *University of Texas Institute of Texas Cultures* is a museum in San Antonio interpreting the major cultural groups that have settled and developed the state.

Many museums in San Antonio and scattered along the route commemorate the history of Texas and Louisiana, but none are specifically associated with El Camino Real.